UK and US join forces to boost natural disaster warning systems

9 June - The UK government and the Met Office will join forces with the US Government, NASA and Google to help improve early warning systems for natural disasters across the developing world.

The new partnership, launched in Washington D.C. today, will bring together organisations from across the globe to improve access to weather forecasts and climate information in developing countries. This will help farmers to plan ahead and boost food production as well as help to predict and plan for weather-related disasters like droughts, floods and storms.

International Development Secretary Justine Greening, said: "The UK's Met Office is home to some of the world's leading climate scientists. Our British Met Office experts, NASA and Google will improve the weather warnings the poorest countries need to get better prepared earlier for devastating natural disasters such as droughts, floods and storms.

"The work these leading British experts will be doing won't just boost vital agricultural production and protect livelihoods, it will also, ultimately, save lives across the developing world."

Met Office Chief Scientist Professor Dame Julia Slingo said: "This partnership will tap into the enormous potential for science to provide better tools to help people in the developing world tackle the risks from weather and climate extremes, something drawn out by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction agreed earlier this year.

"The tools and services developed through this partnership will contribute significantly to greater resilience and preparedness, helping to protect the lives and property of some of the poorest in the world."

As well as producing high-resolution climate projections for Africa, the Met Office will:

· Support the modernisation of weather services in Africa and Asia by building their in-country capabilities

· Develop weather and climate data, information and services to help prepare for extreme weather now and in the future

· Work with partners on the ground to test new ways of communicating weather forecasts and climate information, such as seasonal forecasts

DFID's contribution will support projects that will:

· Strengthen early warning systems for drought, floods and storms and ensure warnings reach the most vulnerable people

· Bring new forecasting technologies into use, giving people more time to prepare for extreme weather

· Produce the first continent-wide detailed future climate projections for Africa working with the Met Office, UK universities and African scientists

· Help businesses, governments and communities in developing countries adapt to climate change through making better information available

Google will provide free access to one petabyte (1,000 terabytes) of cloud storage to house satellite observations and climate and weather data.

The partnership was launched at a special event in Washington today, hosted by US Secretary of State John Kerry. This partnership is one of the commitments announced by President Obama last September at the United Nations Climate Summit in New York.

Founding organisations have committed more than $31 million (£20 million) to the initial phase of the partnership. This includes $10 million (£6.5 million) from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and $10 million from the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

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